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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings from a study of the extent to which different kinds and amounts of parent involvement have different impacts on parents in general, and more specifically, on parents from different income groups in two schools--one all-balck, low-income; the other racially and economically mixed. Interviews were conducted with 60 parents from each school. Specific criteria were established to ascribe high, medium, and low levels of involvement to all parents in the schools. The survey elicited responses on parents' knowledge of and actual participation in school life, parents' aspirations for themselves and their children, and parents' perception of their role in school decision making. Data were analyzed by school, by level of involvement, and by sub-group. Major findings were that: (1) differential outcome may be ascribed to the amount of involvement only in part; (2) differential effects were also demonstrated between parents who were paid for their involvement and those who were not; and (3) whether the school is racially and economically mixed, or isolated, has little effect on patterns of parental involvement or on the attitudes or behaviors of parents related to their school participation. (Author/KH)

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Sharon L. Kagan and Carol Malchmann Schraft

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PREFACE

The Institute for Responsive Education's Reports are an outgrowth of IRE's continuing interest in citizen participation in educational decision-making. This Report, by Sharon Lynn Kagan and Carol M. Schraft, is a synthesis of the quantitative research completed as part of their joint dissertation entitled, "Bringing Parents and Schools Together: A Comparative Study of the Experiences of Low and Middle Income Parents in Two Urban Elementary Schools."

Editing and production work at IRE was the responsibility of Gian Lombardo. Dana Rudolph, IRE Office Manager, typed the manuscript.

ABSTRACT

This Report is a synthesis of the quantitative research from a study of the extent to which different kinds and amounts of parent involvement have different impacts on parents in general, and, more specifically, on parents from different income groups in two schools -- one all-black, low-income; the other racially and economically mixed. Results from the interviews are grouped into indices (involvement, aspirations, perceptions of power) and analyzed by school, level of involvement, and sub-group within these indices. This Report finds that: (i) differential outcome may be ascribed to the amount of involvement only in part; (ii) differential effects were also demonstrated between parents who were paid for their involvement and those who were not; and (iii) whether the school is racially and economically mixed, or isolated, has little effect on patterns of parental involvement or on the attitudes or behaviors of parents related to their school participation.

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of parents in urban schools has long been espoused as a fundamental value endemic to a democratic society. Efforts to engage parents in schools regained popularity during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's and have, until recently, been a condition of many Federal programs to aid education. The impact of parent participation has been studied from a variety of perspectives. Bloom (1964), Lopate, et al. (1969), and others have reported that children benefit from parent involvement in the schools. Davies (1978) indicates that there are not sufficient data to make definite correlations between parent participation and student performance; yet there is evidence to support the notion that school climate improves when parents are involved in even relatively neutral ways, such as through PTA's (Mann, 1973).

The effects of involvement on parents themselves have also been studied. It has been found that involvement in schools alters parents' attitudes towards themselves and towards the school in a positive manner. Adams' (1976) study of Head Start found that all of the parents in the study who had participated in a policymaking capacity reported personal change as a result of their participation. Davies (1978) reports that, from the parents' perspective, the training and opportunities for employment that emanate from school involvement are the most tangible benefits of participation -- skills learned through participation in school life may lead to jobs elsewhere. The national Head Start evaluation by the System Development Corporation (1972) indicated that "parents gained significantly in their positive attitudes about the value and importance of education" (p. 310). Even the critical Westinghouse Learning Corporation (1969) report on Head Start noted the program's impact on parents:

> Parents of Head Start children expressed strong approval of the program and its effect on their children. They reported substantial participation in the activities of the centers (p. 7).

That parents are affected by their own involvement in their children's schools is well documented. What is less well understood is the extent to which different kinds and amounts of school involvement have different impacts on parents in general and, more specifically, on parents from different income groups. To increase understanding of these issues, the study which is reported on here was designed to investigate: (i) the ways in which low, medium, or highly involved parents were differentially affected as a result of school

involvement; and (ii) the degree to which the impact of involvement was related to parents' socio-economic status, or the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the school settings.

Two urban elementary schools (referred to here as Monroe and Wright) were involved in the study. The schools were alike in several ways:

- They received special funds to support programs of school improvement, with emphasis on parent involvement
- They provided a spectrum of opportunities for parents
- They were guided by a common conceptual framework
- They used the same operational model

The model, described elsewhere by Winters and Schraft (1977), is pictorialized as a pyramid, horizontally trisected into three levels: the base and largest population segment of the pyramid (75 percent) represents entry-level activities, including attending PTA general meetings, report card conferences, and social events; the second, or mid-level, is smaller, with fewer parents (15 percent) participating in the day-to-day life of the school on a paid or volunteer basis; and finally, at the apex of the pyramid, the smallest number of parents (10 percent) participate in the most complex school function, school governance, including decisionmaking on personnel and budget matters.

Although there were similarities between the schools, there were important differences. The schools were located in different school districts. Funding for the school improvement programs emanated from different sources. Most critically, the schools had markedly different school compositions. Monroe served a mixed racial and socio-economic community. Children were bused to Monroe to achieve racial balance. Wright was an inner-city school serving an all-black, low-income population. Another important difference between the two schools was that Wright (the all-black and low-income site) provided opportunities for parents to participate in school activities on a paid basis. At Monroe (the racially and economically mixed school) parents participated on a voluntary, non-paid basis only. These settings provided the investigators with a fertile context, enriched by contrasts, that enabled them to compare involvement patterns given divergent variables.

METHOD

Sample

One hundred and twenty parents were included in the study: 60 from each

school. To obtain the parent group, the pyramid construct was used. Specific criteria were established to ascribe high, medium, and low levels of involvement to all parents in the schools. Parents who had a high level of involvement were those who participated in the formally established school or project governance council. Twelve parents with high levels of involvement were included in the sample: six at each school. Parents who had a medium level of involvement were those parents who had actively participated in school support activities, including volunteering in the school or participating in the planning of social affairs. At Monroe, 18 parents were defined as exhibiting a medium level of involvement; and at Wright 20 were so defined. At Wright, however, parents with a medium level of involvement included those who had participated in the paid stipend program. In both schools, all families who were not included in the high or medium involvement levels were considered to have a low involvement level. At Monroe, 142 families were considered to be at the low involvement level, while at Wright, 113 families were included in this category. From this group, families at the low involvement level were randomly selected for the study.

The 120 parents involved in the study present an interesting demographic mix. At Monroe, 30 percent of the parents in the total sample were considered to be low-income, based on children's enrollment in the free lunch program at the school. Using the same criteria, 100 percent of the parents at Wright were considered low-income. Thirty-three percent of all Monroe parents included in the study were black, 62 percent were white, and 5 percent were Hispanic. At Wright, all parents in the study were black.

Instruments

A parent interview instrument was designed to elicit responses on three topics of central importance to the study: (i) parents' knowledge of and actual participation in school life; (ii) parents' aspirations for themselves and their children; and (iii) parents' perception of their role in school decisionmaking. The questions were designed to be broad enough so that even the parent with the lowest level of involvement could respond to the interview schedule. The instrument was piloted with six parents, and their comments were incorporated into the final schedule.

The final version of the Parent Interview Schedule was administered by the investigators, research assistants, and parents with a high level of

involvement who were trained as interviewers. All interviews took place at a location chosen by the parent being interviewed. Eighty-six percent of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the interviewees, with the remaining ones conducted at the school or at the place of the parents' employment.

Indices

Responses from the interviews were coded and then grouped to form indices, corresponding to the areas under investigation. An involvement index was developed to assess the actual degree of involvement, while the outcome variables were divided into parents' aspirations for themselves and their children, and their perceptions of power. Because these indices are used throughout the study, they are described more fully below.

Involvement Index. The involvement index is based upon the premise that involvement is a function of both knowledge of school affairs and actual school participation. While knowledge and participation are not equivalent concepts, they were combined in that knowledge of school life represents potential for participation. For example, a parent may have attended several parent meetings, but because of insufficient information, the participatory gains for the self and the school may have been negligible. Conversely, a knowledgeable parent may attend only one meeting, but make a significant contribution on the basis of knowledge of school affairs. Thus, the involvement index facilitated a more inclusive indicator of school involvement than mere attendance at various events. To determine the involvement index score, the sum of correct responses on knowledge questions and the level of activities in which parents participated were combined. The involvement index yielded the number of parents who actually exhibited high, medium, or low levels of involvement.

Aspiration Indices. Two separate aspiration indices were developed to investigate parents' aspirations. First, to determine parents' aspirations for themselves, a personal aspiration index was created by combining the responses to two questions: "What are your own long-range plans?" and "What steps have you taken to work on these plans?" The personal aspiration index was then compiled by adding the coded value for these questions, yielding three levels of personal aspiration: low, medium and high. A second index was developed to study parents' aspirations for their children. Criteria were developed to facilitate categorization into high, medium and low levels. Although questions on aspirations are subject to a social desirability response effect, the aspirations of parents were hypothesized to be an important variable which could

be modified by school involvement.

Perceptions of Power Index. Parents were asked to indicate the amount of power they felt they had in three areas of school decisionmaking: (i) decisions regarding their own child (e.g., child retention and assignment of youngsters to a classroom); (ii) decisions regarding school programs (e.g., who is hired and special activities); and (iii) decisions regarding system-wide policy. Parental responses were tallied with a possible range of scores. Based upon the distribution of responses, high, medium and low categories of the parents' perceptions of power in decisionmaking were developed.

Design

To answer the basic questions of the study, three distinct analyses were conducted: (i) an analysis by school; (ii) an analysis by level of involvement; and (iii) an analysis by sub-group.

Analysis by School. In the analysis by school, all parents from one school were compared with all parents from the second school. They were compared using the indices for involvement, aspirations for self and children, and perceptions of power in decisionmaking. The chi-square (X^2) test for 2 x N contingency tables was used and, in any table with an expected cell value less than 5, the Yates correction for continuity was applied in that cell.

Analysis by Level of Involvement. To determine whether parents with low, medium and high levels of involvement were differentially affected as a result of their involvement in their children's schools, the analysis by level of involvement was conducted. In this analysis, levels of involvement (high, medium and low) as measured by the involvement index were correlated with parents' levels of aspiration (high, medium, or low) for themselves and their children, and with their perceived level of power in school decisionmaking. Regression analysis was used and the least squares line was computed, yielding both a slope value and a correlation coefficient, r. A t-test was applied to this coefficient to determine the probability that the observed correlations could have resulted from chance. Regression analysis was used because it was hypothesized that there would be an increase in specified variables with increasing levels of involvement.

Analysis by Sub-Groups. Finally, the third analysis investigated how groups of parents from different socio-economic groups with different levels of involvement compared on the indices. Using the chi-square (X^2), three separate sub-group comparisons were made. Sub-group one was composed of all

low-income minority parents from Wright, some of whom were paid for their involvement, and others who were not. This comparison was developed to ascertain if paying parents significantly altered the amount and nature of their involvement. This sub-group is hereafter referred to as "Low-Income Parents From Wright: Paid Compared With Non-Paid."

The second sub-group comparison was made between two groups of parents with high levels of involvement: a group of minority low-income parents who were paid for their involvement, and a racially and economically mixed group of parents who were not paid. This comparison was developed to ascertain if parents with high levels of involvement, in spite of having very difficult socio-economic characteristics, demonstrated similar responses regarding their aspirations and perceptions of power. In other words, did a correlation between the level of involvement and outcome exist, in spite of differences between socio-economic or racial characteristics? This sub-group comparison is hereafter referred to as "Parents With High Levels Of Involvement: Wright Compared With Monroe."

The third sub-group analysis looked at low-income parents from both schools to ascertain if involvement patterns and outcomes varied between parents in an all-black, low-income (homogeneous) school and parents in an economically and racially mixed (heterogeneous) school. This comparison is hereafter called, "Low-Income Parents: Wright Compared With Monroe."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis by School

Involvement. At Monroe (the socially and racially mixed school), the breakdown according to level of involvement was: 28 low; 18 medium; and 14 high. At Wright (the all-black, low-income school), the breakdown was: 32 low; 12 medium; and 16 high. While the schools did not differ significantly from each other, there was a difference at both schools between the projected and actual levels of involvement. The distributional difference between the projections and the findings was due to the stratified sampling technique which included 100 percent of the projected high and medium level of involvement parents and took a random sample of parents with a low level of involvement. This difference between the distribution of projected high, medium and low involved parents and the resulting involvement index indicates that the results from the sample are not generalizable

to the total parent population of the schools. Clearly, the study sought to look at parents at different levels of involvement, rather than developing an accurate portrait of each school.

Parents' Aspirations for Themselves and Their Children. The results of a chi-square test indicated that there were no significant differences between Monroe (mixed racial and socio-economic) and Wright (all-black, low-income) parents in their personal aspirations. However, at the mixed-income school, as expected, a greater percentage of the parents had higher personal aspirations than at the low-income school. Interestingly though, when looking at the influence of the school in altering aspiration levels, 29 percent of Wright parents felt the school had altered their personal aspirations, while only 14 percent at Monroe reported comparable sentiments ($p = .05$). Even though more parents fell in the lower aspirational level at Wright than at Monroe, the positive influence of the school was twice as strong at Wright. This finding underscores the potential role that schools can play in altering the lives of low-income parents. In their aspirations for their children, parents at Monroe and Wright were very much alike. In both groups, over 70 percent of the respondents had professional aspirations for their children. In sum, aspirational levels for self and children seemed to be fairly consistent in both schools. However, Wright parents indicated that the school had been a greater influence in altering their personal aspirations than did Monroe parents.

Perceptions of Power in Decisionmaking. Parents' perception of the amount of say they had in making school decisions may be viewed as a reflection of the amount they perceived their involvement really mattered in the school and/or the amount of authority they were allowed to have in the school. In this study, the opinions of the principal, teachers, parents, and outside observers all supported the fact that at Wright (the all-black, low-income community school) parents were, in fact, given more authority in decisionmaking than were parents at Monroe. When asked questions about the amount of say they had in decisions regarding either their children or the school district, parents at both schools did not differ significantly. However, when asked about power over school activities, parents at Wright clearly perceived that they had more say in the decisions than did parents at Monroe ($p = .001$). When the three categories of power over decisions affecting child, school activities, and district decisions were combined and a total power index computed, 44 percent of Wright

parents indicated they had a great deal of say in decisions generally, while only 22 percent of Monroe parents indicated the same. The strength of the evidence in the light of experience led us to conclude that this was not due to perception alone, but was also due to the fact that Wright parents probably did have a greater voice in decisions regarding school activities. This also indicated that, in this study, parents were given more say over decisions affecting their children than in school or district decisions, regardless of total power perceived.

Analysis by Levels of Involvement

Using the involvement index, it is possible to test for associations between level of involvement (high, medium, and low) and parents' aspirations for self and children, and attitudes toward the school. It can be hypothesized that these linkages are not only present but relate with a high degree of directionality (perhaps linearity) to increasing or decreasing levels of involvement.

Aspirations for Self and Children. The level of parents' involvement in the school was significantly correlated with personal aspirations at Wright ($r = .59$, $p < .001$), but not at Monroe ($r = .05$). Wright parents showed a marked increase in personal aspirations with higher involvement. This supports the potential power of the school as an institution to improve the lives of poor families in inner-city communities. Aspirations for children were correlated with the level of involvement at both schools (Monroe, $r = .28$, $p < .05$; Wright, $r = .34$, $p < .01$). Although some correlation between the level of involvement and aspirations for children appeared evident in both schools, the relative level was again stronger at Wright, the low-income school. This may be explained in part by the generally higher socio-economic status of Monroe parents who held roughly the same aspirations for children regardless of level of involvement. Also, the stronger correlation at Wright may be a reflection of the impact of the paid stipend program. This concurs with an earlier finding that parents at Wright indicated that they were more influenced by the school than parents at Monroe.

Perceptions of Power in Decisionmaking. Finally, perceptions of power in decisionmaking were significantly correlated with the level of parents' involvement at Wright ($r = .49$, $p < .001$), but not at Monroe ($r = .03$). Wright parents demonstrated higher perceived power in school decisionmaking as they became more involved. No such association was observed at Monroe. Indeed,

the Wright parents may have had more power.

Analysis by Sub-Groups

To determine if there is differential impact of a parent program on low- and middle-income parents, parents in the stipend program at Wright (paid parents) were contrasted with two groups: (i) parents at the same school who were not paid; and (ii) the parents with a high level of involvement at Monroe. In addition, Monroe and Wright low-income groups, excluding the paid parents, were compared.

The purposes of relating the sub-group findings were: (i) to confirm or negate the similarity of the low-income parents between the schools; and (ii) to ascertain how the paid parents were alike or different from parents of similar income in their own school and with high involved, mixed income parents at another school.

Low-Income Parents from Wright: Paid Compared with Non-Paid. All parents in this sub-group were black and had children enrolled in the school who received free lunch. Paid parents in the study had been selected from the community served by the school and had been involved in the program from one to three years. Paid parents were remunerated for an average of fifteen hours a week for their work as classroom assistants, tutors, cafeteria aides, and clerical assistants.

Of the parents who were paid parents, 75 percent were ranked as exhibiting a high level of involvement, 12.5 percent medium, and 12.5 percent low, based on their interview responses (not the original selection criteria). By comparison, nine percent of the non-paid parents ranked as exhibiting a high level of involvement, with 24 percent ranking medium, and 67 percent raking low. The results of the chi-square test indicated significance at the .001 level, confirming the difference in level of involvement between paid and non-paid parents. This was not unexpected since parents who are paid for working in a school should be more involved than parents who are not paid. However, significant differences between paid and non-paid parents were found in two other areas: personal aspirations, and perceptions of power. Of the paid participants, 50 percent had personal aspirations in the high level, while only 20 percent of the non-paid sample had aspirations in the high level. Conversely, only 18 percent of the paid sample (but 48 percent of the non-paid sample) had aspirations in the low level. As might be expected, the chi-square statistic

yielded significant differences at the .05 level. In the perception of power category, 62 percent of the paid parents (contrasted with 34 percent of non-paid parents) indicated that they felt highly involved in decisionmaking. Twenty-six percent of the non-paid parents indicated that they perceived parents had a low level of involvement in decisionmaking, while not a single paid parent felt similarly. Paid parents were not statistically distinguished from their non-paid counterparts in their aspirations for their children. Essentially, then, this sub-group comparison indicated that the paid parents were different from non-paid parents on personal variables, including personal aspirations, but not variables affecting aspirations for their children.

Parents With High Levels of Involvement: Wright Compared With Monroe. Because of the significant differences between paid and non-paid parents at Wright, a comparison was made between parents of different economic backgrounds, but of the same involvement level in school. Since the vast majority (75 percent) of the paid parents at Wright had a high level of involvement, it seemed reasonable to compare them with parents at Monroe with a high level of involvement who were (for the most part) white and not low-income. In spite of racial and economic differences, the paid parents at Wright (black, low-income) statistically resembled parents with a high level of involvement at Monroe (mostly white mainstream) in their aspirations for themselves and their children and in their perceptions of power in decisionmaking. On variables that may be affected by the presence of a parent participation program, low-income paid parents more closely resembled parents with a high level of involvement and of mixed socio-economic background than non-paid parents in their own school with similar socio-economic status. This finding suggests that paying low-income parents for their participation yields aspirations and perceptions of power comparable to those of middle-income parents who are involved in the school program.

Low-Income Parents: Wright Compared With Monroe. The question addressed in this set of comparisons is: Are low-income parents from a racially and economically mixed setting (Monroe) different on behavioral and attitudinal variables from low-income parents in an all black, low-income setting (Wright)? The behavioral and attitudinal variables under consideration were: (i) level of involvement in the school; (ii) aspirations for self and children; and (iii) perceived power in the school.

Socio-economic status for the purpose of this study was determined by the

parents' stated eligibility for participation in the free lunch program in each school. All of the parents considered in this analysis had indicated that they were eligible for the free lunch program. Of those who indicated such eligibility, 65 percent at Monroe and 30 percent at Wright were employed. Race aside, this was the most distinguishing variable between the groups. In the three variables (involvement, aspirations, and perceived power), no significant difference was found between groups. Low-income parents, in spite of vast differences in city, school, and school compositions, were more alike than they were different. Clearly, non-paid, low-income parents, regardless of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of their school settings, were strikingly similar.

In sum, the sub-group comparisons indicate a great deal of dissimilarity between paid and non-paid parents at one low-income urban school. However, the group of paid parents demonstrated similar results on the variables under study to the more affluent parents in the mixed-income urban school who had a high level of involvement. This fact seems to support the notion that providing strong inducements for school improvement to low-income parents may produce outcomes already apparent with more affluent parents. That low-income families with a low level of involvement were strikingly similar to each other but different from parents with high levels of involvement, regardless of school setting, further supports the potential power of a well-defined program of involvement in altering parental attitudes.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the practice and effects of involving parents in urban schools. Specifically, the investigators sought to understand: (i) the ways in which parents with low, medium, or high levels of involvement were differentially affected as a result of their school involvement; and (ii) the degree to which the impact of involvement was related to the socio-economic status of the parents or to the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the school setting. The study indicated that parents were differentially affected.

The first finding indicates that differential outcome may be associated with the amount of involvement only in part. Parents at the low-income school demonstrated a strong correlation between level of involvement and personal aspirations. As low-income parents became more involved in school life, they

developed higher personal aspirations. However, this did not hold true at the mixed income school. Here, parents demonstrated high aspirations, regardless of their level of involvement. These findings suggest that, in the case of low-income families, outcomes may be strongly related to level of school involvement. However, outcomes for mainstream parents may be a reflection of a value system that was in place prior to school involvement. For example, parents who had high aspirations prior to program inception retained those values regardless of level of involvement in school life. The study suggests that outcomes are not influenced solely by involvement level, but by factors associated with socio-economic status operative prior to program inception. Therefore, high, medium, or low levels of involvement are not the cause of program effect; but, for low-income parents in particular, there is some correlation between the intensity of involvement and the ultimate effect.

The second major finding suggests that differential effects were also demonstrated between paid and non-paid parents. It became clear during the course of the study that the low-income parents who were modestly paid for their school involvement were considerably different on all outcome indicators from their low-income, non-paid counterparts. That they demonstrated aspirations and perceptions of power comparable to the mixed income parents with a high level of involvement suggests that, with supports and particularly financial reimbursement, low-income parents can be involved in and reap benefits from an active program of parent participation. That meaningful involvement can be induced refutes the misconception that low-income parents are unwilling or unable to become partners with public schools.

Finally, while parents were differentially affected based on involvement or receiving payment, the third major finding reveals that whether the school was racially and economically mixed or isolated had little effect on parental involvement, attitudes or behavior. For example, there was no significant difference on outcome variables between parents with a high level of involvement in the homogeneous versus the heterogeneous setting. One might expect to see a difference among low-income parents with a low level of involvement between the two settings, but, again, none was found. The results also indicate that there was little difference in the involvement patterns of low-income parents in the all low-income school versus the mixed income school. Low-income parents demonstrated comparable involvement patterns, concerns and aspirations, regardless of school setting. This held true in an integrated setting where

busing occurred and in the segregated all low-income black setting where all families lived within walking distance of the school. This finding suggests that low-income parents remain comparably uninvolved in segregated or integrated school settings, an interesting commentary on adult behavior in light of current controversies regarding racial balance. Clearly, the task of bringing low-income parents into public schools, even to neighborhood schools, remains difficult. Paying low-income parents for their participation in the day-to-day life of the school appears to be a strong inducement in overcoming parent-school alienation.

While parent involvement cannot be a panacea for redressing the complex problems endemic to urban schools, and while it cannot answer the complicated social problems found in low-income areas, it can be one element in a school or a community effort to improve school climate, to improve school-community relations, and to alter parents' attitudes toward themselves, their children, and their community. Given an era marked by increasing constraints on human and financial resources, and a re-emphasis on children's basic skills, it is hoped that educational policymakers, program planners, and implementors will respect fundamental child development and democratic principles by recognizing parent involvement as an educational imperative.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

The Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) is a private, non-profit national research, policy analysis and technical assistance organization which has a history of conducting studies on and disseminating information about community involvement in public school decisionmaking since 1973. Although private and independent, IRE is housed at Boston University where its President and founder, Don Davies, formerly Deputy Commissioner in the United States Office of Education, is now Professor in the School of Education.

Founded on the premises that citizen participation is an essential ingredient in school improvement and that citizens' access to information is indispensable for effective participation, IRE has throughout its history produced more than 27 reports including field-research monographs, bibliographies and literature reviews, and translations of complex educational issues into popular form.

IRE Reports are yet another series of publications that have arisen from continuing IRE efforts to better understand and assist citizen participation in educational decisionmaking and to disseminate this information and experience to citizens, educators and policymakers.

IRE has been involved in other facets of citizen participation which include school-community councils, citizen roles in educational collective bargaining, Federal and state policies affecting citizen participation, the role of citizen-initiated organizations, declining enrollment, and citizen action research for school improvement.

In all of its work, IRE stresses a combination of study and action which makes for richer and more useful research and for action that has a solid base of data and experience. Hence, in addition to conducting studies and producing reports aimed primarily at policymakers, IRE has continued to collect and disseminate materials for community groups and citizens interested in public school decisionmaking. To this end, IRE houses an ongoing clearinghouse of information for citizens and publishes a national newsjournal, Citizen Action in Education. Through this clearinghouse, IRE addresses community-based education needs by the continual collection of reports, studies, handbooks, and the dissemination of information in response to phone calls and written requests. Citizen Action in Education, with a subscription list of nearly 24,000, reports on current developments and models in the field of citizen participation in educational decisionmaking.

In order to expand the clearinghouse and its utility, we openly invite more materials on citizen participation. This will assist us in our efforts to provide more specific information to groups and individuals requesting assistance. Please send materials and ideas to:

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